

Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations

South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council for the General Agency South Dakota Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (Board)

As reflected in the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2012:

The State Rehabilitation Council – is established in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act) and 34 CFR 361.16-361.17 of its implementing regulations.

The State Rehabilitation Council - known in South Dakota as the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation – gives advice to and works in partnership with the vocational rehabilitation agency in South Dakota - Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division).

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program operates effectively and remains responsive to the needs of those served.

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation partners with the Division of Rehabilitation Services to develop policies, plan activities, evaluate program effectiveness and carry out other functions related to the vocational rehabilitation program.

The working relationship between the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division of Rehabilitation Services is a partnership focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services. The Division of Rehabilitation Services has been responsive to inquiries from the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation met on four different occasions during this reporting period: December 5/6, 2011 in Sioux Falls; March 22/23, 2012 in Ft. Pierre; June 6/7, 2012 in Aberdeen; and September 27/28, 2012 in Ft. Pierre. These meetings were open to the public and held in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and the State's open meeting law, SDCL, 1-25-1.

Summary of Input and Recommendations:

- At the Board's direction a new member orientation was held in conjunction with the December meeting. Four new appointed members were in attendance, as well as the Board Chairperson and board member representing the Client Assistance Program. Division and Board staff utilized the on-line training modules developed by Rehabilitation Services Administration, and overviews of the Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services and South Dakota Advocacy Services/Client Assistance Program were provided.

Division's Response: The Division supports the new member orientation and assisted with the training.

- The Board hosted the Sioux Falls Business Resource Network (SFBRN) board members and staff while in Sioux Falls. The SFBRN promotes the hiring of people with disabilities by educating employers and the public by fostering an environment that will assist businesses in improving their production and efficiency. Conversation points with SFBRN consisted of – what are you hearing from the Sioux Falls business community about recruiting/hiring/working with people with disabilities, what are the needs in the employment pool base in the community, what's working well and are there some areas that could be improved? Board members and staff were identified as facilitators and note takers to gather information. The notes gathered were shared with all parties involved.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the presentation by the SFBRN and also funds this program.*

- Disability Determination Services (DDS) staff provided an overview of the program, and explained examining cases for determining eligibility/ineligibility decisions for SSI and SSDI. Members learned of the staff shortage due to the federal hiring freeze, but noted that South Dakota has one of the highest approval rates in the country with over 10,000 applications determined yearly by claims specialists. Members learned that DDS is a part of the Division of Rehabilitation Services in the state's Department of Human Services and it is 100% federally funded.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the presentation by the Disability Determination Services program and assisted in arranging this presentation.*

- Sioux Falls Vocational Rehabilitation Services office staff provided information to members about counties served, caseload size per counselor, location of the satellite offices and activities that staff are involved with (i.e., Society of Human Resource Managers, Business Network Resource, and Project SEARCH). The presentation provided members with a better idea of services available to consumers, range of age of consumers served, and the size of territory covered.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the presentation by the Sioux Falls VR staff and assisted in arranging this presentation.*

- A request was made to have an update on SDMYLIFE, which is a resource for students in high school to complete academic and career planning. It is a career/technical website offered through the Department of Labor and Regulation and the Department of Education provides SDMYLIFE free to all South Dakota students and parents. This resource is a combined partnership with SD businesses, industries, career coaches and other work based opportunities. Students can conduct job searches, ask educational

and career related questions of the identified partners and receive responses directly from them.

Division's Response: *The Division supports this request and arranged for Dr. Janeen Outka, East Dakota Educational Cooperative to present on this topic.*

- A request was made to view Independent Living Choices promotional video "Opening Doors for People with Disabilities". The video spoke to available services and programs, and it featured several consumers and the services they received to remain independent. Members learned of consumers who require services of both programs (IL services and vocational rehabilitation services) to successfully reach their employment goals.

Division's Response: *The Division supports this request and arranged for a presentation on this topic.*

- The Executive Committee presented the Annual Report in draft format during the December meeting. Members were asked to submit edits prior to the end of the month. The report was finalized and submitted to the Governor and RSA Commissioner as well as other interested entities (e.g., Statewide Independent Living Council, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired).

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board with this initiative and provided information for the annual report.*

- Through the Board's committee structure, the Consumer Services Committee reviewed the Division's proposed changes to the administrative rules impacting due process during this reporting period. Through the committee input and feedback was provided regarding the modified due process, along with feedback from the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired Board and feedback gained from posting the draft document on the Department's website.

Division's Response: *The Division incorporated recommendations from the Board on the rule changes and for the development of a policy.*

- The Board Chairperson participated on a conference call with Rehabilitation Services Administration staff. Items discussed

included an upcoming RSA on-site visit, introductions of staff and their roles within RSA, and the VR monitoring process and monitoring focus areas. The Board Chairperson outlined the role of the Board in South Dakota and its working relationship with agency staff.

Division's Response: The Division supports the Board's involvement with RSA and participation in the on-site review.

- A conference call was held during the March quarterly meeting with Rehabilitation Services Administration staff to provide an overview of the monitoring focus areas for the pending on-site visit. The Board also provided feedback to RSA staff on how they provide input on policies and procedures, State Plan development, agency goals and strategic planning. Feedback was also provided on the visibility of the agency, working collaborative relationships with other agencies and employers, serving Native Americans, and Board staff support.

Division's Response: The Division supports the Board's involvement with RSA and participation in the on-site review.

- The Board, the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (BSBVI), Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, South Dakota Advocacy Services, Council on Developmental Disabilities, South Dakota Parent Connection and the Lower Brule Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Program held a public meeting in Lower Brule in April. Notices and flyers were disseminated to encourage attendance. Information on various programs and available services was shared with attendees and comments were gathered and disseminated to all participating groups.

Division's Response: The Division supports the Board's involvement with the other councils and networking with other agencies for this public meeting.

- The Board supported the Governor's Awards Ceremony in addition to the solicitation and gathering of nominations. Representatives of

the Board, SILC and BSBVI review nominations and provide their recommendations to the Governor for his final review and approval.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's involvement with the Governor's Awards and the Division assisted with this initiative.*

- The Board, BSBVI, SILC and Divisions provided support - financial, manpower hours, expertise, etc. - to eleven communities to host National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities. These are one day awareness events that provide education to the public regarding the strengths and talents that people with disabilities bring to the workforce. The Oun'yekiyapi Vocational Rehabilitation Program also held an event which was attended by Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Department of Human Services' staff.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's involvement with the NDEAM activities and promotes these events in the local communities.*

- The Board requested that the Division keep them abreast of the South Dakota Needs Survey of Parents of Children with Hearing Loss. This survey was a combined effort between the Departments of Human Services and Education, SD School for the Deaf and the Governor's Office. The instrument obtained information about the developmental, educational, social, recreational, transition, work readiness, and career development needs of South Dakota's youth with hearing loss. Results will be utilized in development of future State Plans.

Division's Response: *The Division supports this request and the results will be shared with the Board with the survey report is finalized.*

- The Board approved financial support of the 2012 Dare to Dream Conference, which is a bi-annual cross disability conference. Attendees are persons with disabilities, family members or families of children with disabilities. A unique component of this conference is the provision of child and respite care allowing individuals to attend sessions, who otherwise would be providing care of family members. Attendees meet others with disabilities, allowing the

opportunity to learn from them as well as learn what services and supports are available. Sessions topics included: employment and benefits, transition, self-advocacy, assistive technology, healthy relationships, reporting abuse, aging and developmental disabilities, changing behaviors and teaching social skills, and person centered thinking.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's involvement with the Dare to Dream Conference.*

- The Board consults with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council and the two Divisions annually about the need to fulfill vacancies. Subsequently, nominations are solicited statewide for the pending vacancies.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's involvement with requesting nominations for the Board of VR.*

- Several members attended the Partners in Policymaking listening session hosted by South Dakota Advocacy Services held in Sioux Falls (April). Comments and other information obtained through this medium are shared with the Board and Division staff and utilized in the development of future state plans.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's involvement with Partners in Policy initiative.*

- The Consumer Services Committee met in May to review the draft State Plan document attachments. The draft documents are also posted on the Division's website for additional public review and input. The committee's recommendations were brought forward to the Board during the June meeting for consideration and implementation prior to the State Plan being presented to the State Workforce Development Council for final approval and submission to RSA.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's involvement with reviewing the State Plan and incorporated their recommended changes.*

- The Board's June meeting was held in Aberdeen which allowed members to meet and learn from Northern State University's Disability Services Coordinator. Members learned about academic support services, coordination of services for students with disabilities with vocational rehabilitation and other providers, their involvement with Catch the Wave, regional transition forums, Youth Leadership Forum, and making referrals to other programs.

Division's Response: The Division supports the Board's initiative to have a presentation on disability services at a University campus.

- Aberdeen Vocational Rehabilitation Services office staff met with members in June and shared information about territory covered, outreach efforts, and staff in given areas. Members learned about the partnership between vocational rehabilitation services and Presentation College with the Transition Learning Center for students with disabilities, as well as their work with the Native American Vocational Rehabilitation programs served in this area.

Division's Response: The Division supports the Board's initiative to have a presentation on VR services and partnership with programs in the Aberdeen area.

- The Board met with Aberdeen Central High School Special Education staff to talk about the partnership with Presentation College. The combined effort forms the Transition Learning Campus – which is a program for students with disabilities, 18-21 years old who want to work towards post-secondary educational goals, providing a college atmosphere with same-age peers. Eligible students have been on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and completed classes required to graduate, but have not received a diploma. Students may take college classes for credit or audit the classes. Members learned about the working relationship between school districts, vocational rehabilitation, transition specialists, teachers, families, and post-secondary education staff.

Division's Response: The Division supports the Board's initiative to have a presentation on programs in the Aberdeen area that serve youth with disabilities. .

- During this reporting period, the Consumer Services Committee reviewed and commented on a draft survey for community support providers to help identify specific training needs. The hope is to learn more about barriers to training at the provider level and what can be done to increase provider participation. Division staff is also working with Division of Developmental Disabilities staff to collaborate on training topics to mutually benefit more individuals. Initial dissemination of the survey will be conducted in January 2013 and incoming results and other feedback shared with the Board.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's involvement and input into the provider survey.*

- During several quarterly meetings, staff participating in the Division's Future's Initiative have attended and shared their experiences with the Board. Future's is a project designed for Division staff interested in moving into a new, different or expanded role within the agency. Staff gains knowledge, skills and abilities by taking leadership roles with project development. During this reporting period, the Board heard about a number of projects that staff were working on (MOU's, development of specialized training areas, revised program brochures, re-written policies and procedures, joining SHRM Chapters). The Board has provided feedback and support of the Division's initiative which promotes succession planning.

Division's Response: *The Division continues to keep the VR Board on the Futures initiative and to present on this topic at meetings. .*

- At the September meeting, the Board had the opportunity to meet and have conversation with the Department of Human Services Secretary. Secretary Gill talked about the department's reorganization, looking at internal efficiencies and organizational goals. Secretary Gill spoke to the Department being in the midst of developing a strategic plan and once it was completed, it would be shared with various boards and councils for input and feedback.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's meeting with Secretary Gill on the Department of Human Services and strategic plan.*

- The Board had the opportunity to meet a trainer who was in state working with agency staff. They learned about training tools and motivational strategies to effect change within consumers. Members also learned that these training strategies compliment working with other state systems (e.g., Division of Developmental Disabilities) which promote growth and change within consumers to become gainfully employed.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's interest in learning on new VR Counselor strategies.*

- Discussion at the September meeting regarding the use of the public comment period prompted the Board to look at this item in further detail. As a result, in addition to the regularly scheduled public comment period (submitted in person, written, or electronically) the Board has outlined the ability of an individual to make Public Comment via a conference call, by making arrangements with staff prior to the meeting. Another resulting change was the addition of "Announcements" to each meeting agenda. The document created and approved by the Board will be attached with each meeting agenda.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's request to review the public comment period on their agenda.*

- The Board took action of renewing their organizational membership with the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. Members recognized the value of this partnership and resource to stay better connected with activities of the Coalition, which includes the Disability Advocacy Network, Disability Policy Summit, statewide ADA trainings, and more.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's action on continuing their membership of disability organizations.*

- A request was made to have Department of Labor and Regulation (DOLR) return and provide an update on the National Career

Readiness Certificate and respond to questions being heard from employers, about testing procedures, accommodation requests, and about DOLR's staff knowledge or expertise working with people with disabilities. The update included information on the three main skill sets administered and developing a new "soft-skills" set, as well as recruiting employers to conduct job profiling. Member's concerns were addressed regarding individuals making accommodation requests and employers wanting individuals with higher level certificates. Education is being done with employers on identifying and selecting the most qualified applicant vs. hiring an overqualified individual. Training is also being done with DOLR staff on "customer service" working with applicants and offering assistance with accommodation requests.

Division's Response: The Division supports the Board's request for an update on the National Career Readiness Certificate.

- An update is typically provided at each meeting on activities with the Employer Resource Network which is expanding to other communities beyond Aberdeen (e.g., Brookings, Sioux Falls, Yankton, and Rapid City). This is a diversity initiative that encouraged partnerships between human resource professionals in the business community and vocational rehabilitation providers to address labor force issues and training needs. Some other reports typically heard at the meetings include updates on Project SEARCH and the Employment and Benefits trainings.

Division's Response: The Division supports the Board's request for on-going updates on the Employer Resource Network.

- Throughout this reporting period the Board and Division encouraged members to attend meetings, events or trainings to enhance the member's ability to understand and meet the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities. The 2012 Fall Conference was well attended by members. It offered sessions on: disclosure and mentoring, career assessments, transition assessments, reenergizing partnerships, assuring success for American Indians attending post- secondary programs, unresolved grief, skills to pay

the bills, ethical dilemmas in working with parents, customized employment, and assistive technology options.

Division's Response: *The Division supports the Board's participation and attendance to attend the annual Fall Conference.*